

VZCZCXRO7871
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #2410/01 2010742
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 200742Z JUL 07
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2348
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002410

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/20/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: FADILA HEAD: CREATION OF NEW FRONT 'IMMINENT'

REF: A. BAGHDAD 1664

[B](#). BAGHDAD 452

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert Ford for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#). (C) SUMMARY: In a July 17 meeting Shia Islamist party Fadila's leader Hassan Shemmeri asserted that the creation a new political front that will include Sunni and Shi'a parties was imminent. He hinted that the front will support Ja'afari for prime minister. He criticized the parties that form the core of the current governing coalition for working against Iraq's unity, citing its members' positions on the hydrocarbon law. Claims of Sunni support for the front could not be verified and are probably overstated. Even if the new political party front comes together we do not sense it poses an immediate threat to Prime Minister Maliki. END SUMMARY.

A New Front and a New PM

[2](#). (C) Shemmeri predicted the announcement of a new political front "in the near future." He said the front will include Fadila, the Sadr Bloc, Tawafuq, Iraqiyya, Saleh Mutlak's party, some Shi'a independents, and some elements of the Dawa party. He added that Dawa Tanzim will support the front. Acknowledging that the Kurds were not included, he said they would be welcome to join provided they committed themselves to a strong, unified Iraq - the central goal of the front.

[3](#). (C) Shemmeri said the front would enjoy the support of Sunni insurgent groups and Arab states, in particular the UAE and Jordan, which he said had pledged to turn their energies to stopping terrorism in Iraq should the front form a government. He also said the front's ability to restore domestic security would enable it to stand up to Tehran and develop a balanced, state-to-state relationship with Iran.

[4](#). (C) Poloff asked how Tawafuq could work with the Sadrists given the sectarian violence linked to JAM. Shemmeri responded that the Sadr bloc pledged to distance itself from the militias. Shemmeri added that the Sadrists want a firm commitment for a withdrawal of MNF-I, but with such a commitment and associated timetable would be content with a gradual pullout lasting "up to a decade." (Comment: The Sadrist bloc, while having backed off calls for an immediate withdrawal in favor of a "timetable," has never indicated they would support such a drawn-out timetable. End Comment.)

[5](#). (C) Discussing the office of the prime minister, Shemmeri claimed that "if we proposed Ja'afari," he would form a non-sectarian government of technocrats. Poloff pointed out that many CoR members felt that Ja'afari had already been given a chance to govern and had not performed

well. Shemmeri responded that any prime minister, up to and including Maliki, could not succeed given the sectarian political conditions in Iraq. He concluded that Ja'afari, while not perfect, was the most appropriate candidate for Prime Minister at the head of a new, non-sectarian coalition. PolOff said that the U.S. supported Prime Minister Maliki and believed that U.S. and Iraqi interests would be best served by efforts to support his government.

Criticizing the Group of 4, aka the Governing Front

¶6. (C) Shemmeri characterized the 'group of 4,' which, with some irony, he called the "moderate front," as a project that sought to divide the Iraqi nation. (The group of 4 has the Shia Islamist Da'wa and ISCI parties along with the two Kurdish parties.) He said Fadila was asked to join the group but would not unless the governing coalition committed to a unified, national Iraq and changed its policies to reflect that commitment. He gave the hydrocarbon law, which he said needed to be modified, as an example of the group's disinclination to see a strong, unified Iraq. He added that the Moderate Front would fail because it did not include the Sadrists, who have strong popular appeal. Similarly, he predicted that the IIP could not be induced to join it because the Sunni street would abandon them. Shemmeri said the new front, in contrast, would appeal to the Sunni street as a nationalist, non-sectarian Iraqi political movement.

Comment

BAGHDAD 00002410 002 OF 002

¶7. (C) Shemmeri and his associates in Fadhila have described similar concepts before (reftels). In fact, the 15-member Fadila parliamentary delegation has tried to play a coordinating role since leaving the Shi'a Coalition's parliamentary bloc in March. This time, if Shemmeri is to be believed, the project is more advanced politically, with the Sadrists and Sunnis joining the discussion and a potential candidate for Prime Minister - Ibrahim al-Ja'fari - being floated. Our back of the envelope calculation would give this new bloc roughly 135 seats - close to a majority in the 275 member assembly. However, Sunni political contacts from the main political parties in Tawafiq and Hewar have made no mention of the front, so the claim on Sunni participation remains uncertain. Moreover, if the front was created, the Sadrists and Sunnis would be unpredictable bedfellows. We expect it would prove difficult to hold such a coalition together. We therefore doubt this new front would pose a huge challenge to Prime Minister Maliki. End comment.
CROCKER